

A Guide to Home Visits



**Michigan Department of Education
Early Childhood Programs**

This guide was produced through federal legislation (P.L. 101-476)
for early childhood specialists who make home visits.
3,000 copies were printed at a cost of \$1,013.35 or \$0.337 per copy.

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Introduction

This guide is for public school and private agency teachers and support staff whose programs include visiting the homes of children and their families. It will provide a philosophy for making home visits, practical advice on preparing for the visit, appropriate procedures for implementing and completing the visit, as well as guidelines for post visit practices. Also included are safety tips, general suggestions, a sample letter introducing parents to teachers, sample forms for documenting visits, a team teaching checklist, and examples of successful home visits. This guide was written with the experience and insight of home visiting professionals from throughout the state with the intent to provide technical assistance to teachers and staff who also make home visits.

Staff of Early Childhood Programs would like to express their sincere appreciation to the following people who contributed their time and expertise to this guide:

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- ★ **Liz Colegrove**, C.D.A., Teacher and Assistant Director, Jackson Child Care Center
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Why Make Home Visits?

Teachers are making home visits in order to better meet the needs of the child and family. In promoting a partnership between parents and teachers, home visits provide the means for effective team problem solving, observing children in their home environment, and encouraging parent involvement. While providing teaching services for the child, home visits may also lend distressed parents needed support to foster positive parenting. Effective home visiting furthers the mental, emotional, and physical health and development of the child by serving the whole family.

The Initial Visit

Staff Preparation

Notify the parent of home visit

- ★ Contact parent a week to 10 days in advance by phone and letter (see Appendix A for sample letter) and follow up with a phone call
- ★ Schedule at family's convenience as much as possible
- ★ Include purpose of visit (i.e., to provide information about preschool, learn about family)
- ★ Set time limit (i.e., 4:30 – 5:30)

Review child's records, family history, cultural background

- ★ Learn names of family members
- ★ Research special needs issues

Develop tentative plan for visit

- ★ Be flexible
- ★ Schedule 45 to 60 minutes for each home visit
- ★ Plan travel time, sequence of visits
- ★ Dress appropriately
- ★ Gather equipment, toys, papers, pamphlets, etc.
- ★ Be sure of location, carry maps of area
- ★ Leave schedule of home visits and emergency contact information with office personnel

Arrival

Set the tone

- ★ Introduce self and staff
- ★ Establish social connection (small talk)
- ★ Include other family members in conversation, to make conducive to learning if desired by primary caregiver
- ★ Modify the environment (babies crying, TV, other distractions)
- ★ Settle at a work place, i.e., the kitchen or living room (ask for suggestions)

During the Visit

Share information and lend support

- ★ Review the purpose of the visit
- ★ Establish goals; discover how the program and/or teacher can serve the family
- ★ Discuss direction of visit with parent
- ★ Give program overview; explain and interpret
- ★ Elicit feedback from parents regarding child's interests, concerns, and progress in program and at home:
 "tell me about your child" or "what does your child like best about school?"
- ★ Discuss parents' interests, hobbies, strengths
- ★ Share information about community resources
- ★ Observe family interaction in its cultural context
- ★ Reinforce positive parenting
- ★ Model a teaching activity for future parent/child in-home interactions

Concluding the Visit

Summary

- ★ Summarize content of visit
- ★ Provide information about future parent activities
- ★ Highlight school activities, events
- ★ Invite parents to get involved
- ★ Discuss next visit
- ★ Make yourself available for phone calls and questions
- ★ Closure and good-bye

Post Visit

- ★ Document visit (see Appendix B for sample forms)
- ★ Evaluation: modify education plan according to visit finding(s)
- ★ Process visit accessing support from peers and supervisors
- ★ Follow through on referrals, and document outcomes

The Subsequent Visit

- ★ Share information and lend support
- ★ Discuss progress and concerns in classroom and at home
- ★ Discuss transition into kindergarten and other programs
- ★ Teacher/Parent/Child activity, discuss summer activities for parent and child, provide resources, i.e., activities supporting the transition process
- ★ Informal program evaluation (parent opinion)
- ★ Summarize (as in initial visit)














SAFETY TIPS

Don't be a target









- ☞ Stay alert
- ☞ Dress appropriately
- ☞ Leave jewelry at home
- ☞ Leave purse at office or trunk
- ☞ Carry necessary cash, keys, and driver's license on person
- ☞ Remove yourself from dangerous situations
- ☞ Travel in pairs when possible
- ☞ Survey the neighborhood
- ☞ Identify safe areas (i.e., restaurants, telephones, rest rooms, police stations)
- ☞ Trust your instincts
- ☞ Consider a neutral meeting location if visit cannot be made safely at home (i.e., library, conference rooms, restaurants)
- ☞ Ask family members to come out to meet you if uncomfortable with area
- ☞ Keep car in good repair
- ☞ Keep emergency supplies in car, include all-weather gear
- ☞ Ask family to secure pets before arrival
- ☞ Attend safety seminars
- ☞ Consider the use of cellular phones or pagers

Suggestions*

D O

-  *Be a good listener*
-  *Have specific goals or objectives for each visit*
-  *Be flexible*
-  *Be prompt to your home visits*
-  *Realize the limitations of your role*
-  *Help parents become more independent*
-  *Keep language appropriate*
-  *Dress appropriately and comfortably*
-  *Be confident*
-  *Remember that small improvements lead to big ones*
-  *Be yourself*
-  *Respect cultural and ethnic values*
-  *Monitor your own behavior — the parent is observing you*

D O N ' T

-  *Impose values*
-  *Bring visitors without the parent's permission*
-  *Socialize excessively at the beginning of the visit*
-  *Exclude other members of the family from the visit*
-  *Talk about families in public*
-  *Be the center of attention*
-  *Expect perfection from the parent*
-  *Ask the parent to do something you wouldn't do*

*adapted from The Head Start Home Visitor Handbook

Appendix A

Sample Letter of Introduction

Dear _____ ,

On _____ at _____ , we would like to visit
date time

you and _____ in your home. Our visit will last
child's name

about thirty minutes. During our visit, we would like to

purpose of visit

Please let us know if this date and time are convenient for you by checking the appropriate box below.

We look forward to meeting with you and _____.
child's name

Sincerely,

Teacher

Staff Member

Please return to teacher.

HOME VISIT

☐ YES. This date and time are convenient.

☐ NO. This date and time are inconvenient.

child's name

parent's signature

Appendix B

Sample Documentation Forms

PUBLIC SCHOOL/AGENCY
Department of Early Childhood Education

Home Visit Report Form

Name of Parent/Guardian: _____

Child's Name: _____

Date of Visit: _____ Time: _____

Confirmed By: _____ Date: _____

Names of Persons Making Visit: _____

PURPOSE OF OUTREACH

☐ Child's Success

☐ At-Home Games

☐ Child's Special Interests

☐ Resource Provision

☐ Completed forms for Health, Vision, etc.

☐ School/Parent Activities

Summary of Home Visit:

#2

Child's Name: _____ Date: _____

Parent's Name: _____ Home Visitor: _____

Purpose of Contact: _____

Parent Interested in:	Materials/Games left for Child:

Evaluations:	Special Interests/Follow-Up:
Visit completed <input type="checkbox"/>	
No one at home — Note left <input type="checkbox"/>	
Purpose achieved <input type="checkbox"/>	
Purpose not achieved <input type="checkbox"/>	

HOME VISIT PLAN/REPORT

#3

Child's ID#: _____ Child's Name: _____ Program: _____

Home Visitor: _____ Date: _____ Time: _____ Rescheduled Date: _____ Time: _____

Visit Cycle _____ Visit Scheduled? Yes ☐ No ☐ Visit Completed Yes ☐ No ☐ Length of Visit: _____

Home Activity Follow Through:

Activity/Objective	Base Line	Post Base Line	(✓) Skill Achieved
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Home Visitor Comments:

Parent Comments:

Parent Signature _____ Home Activity Worked On? Yes ☐ No ☐ Length of Time _____

#4

Home Visit Report

Date:

Time:

Child's Name:

Parent's Name:

Purpose:

Activity:

Accomplishments:

Suggested Follow-Up:

Home Visitor Signature: _____

Parent Signature: _____

Appendix C

Examples of Home Visits

- I. Travis is four years old and enrolled in the preschool program. He enjoys circle time activities. Travis plays with the children in many of the learning centers during self-selection. He states that his favorite activities include skipping and galloping with music, building with large blocks, using the climber, and bouncing, throwing, and catching the ball.

HOME VISIT

Purpose: To plan strategies that nurture Travis' interests and abilities in gross motor activities.

1. Share with parent/guardian Travis' interest in the activities stated above.
 2. Discuss activities Travis enjoys at home.
 3. Together, decide on experiences to enhance Travis' interests in gross motor activities (bicycling; using a ball/bat; ice skating; visiting the library for books about sports; swimming; playing soccer; attending sporting events).
 4. Suggest to parent/guardian that he/she maintain a diary or photo album of these activities.
 5. Planned Activity:
 - a. Ask Travis to draw his favorite sport that he enjoys at home. Ask appropriate questions about child's drawing. Write on bottom of drawing as Travis dictates his story.
 - b. Bring a ball to the home visit. Go outside with child and parent/guardian. Demonstrate ball handling skills (throwing, catching, bouncing).
-

- II. Angela is four years old and enrolled in the preschool program. She is hesitant about participating in most group experiences (small group time and circle time). She often becomes timid and tearful during these activities. Angela spends most of self-selection time in the dramatic play area using materials alone. Her parents initially appeared embarrassed and angry that their daughter was not adjusting to the preschool program.

HOME VISIT

Purpose: To highlight Angela's strengths in the classroom and at home. To plan strategies that build Angela's confidence during group experiences.

1. Emphasize the activities/segments of the daily routine that Angela appears to enjoy (Examples: Pretend cooking in family life area-dramatic play; cooking activities during small group; restaurant in dramatic play. . .)
2. Discuss activities Angela enjoys at home.

3. Together, decide on strategies that will increase Angela's participation during group activities. (Praise/encourage efforts by child to participate; allow Angela to help plan a cooking activity at home and during small group time; invite a friend to have a picnic in the backyard . . .)
4. Suggest to parent/guardian that he/she maintain a diary or photo album of these activities.
5. Planned Activity:
Make pudding (or jello) in a cup for each member of the family and/or friends. Discuss each step of the recipe. Ask Angela to invite 2-3 of her neighborhood friends over for a party.

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If you have any questions or concerns regarding this guide, please call Early Childhood Programs at (517) 373-8483.